



DETROIT/WAYNE COUNTY PORT AUTHORITY

8109 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit, Michigan 48214

HB 4563: Michigan Border Development & Protection Act

Michigan House Committee on New Economy and Quality of Life

June 28, 2007

The Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority ("DWCPA") is a special-purpose authority created in 1978 to promote and facilitate commerce, trade and economic development throughout the City of Detroit and Wayne County. The DWCPA was enabled by Public Act 639 of 1978, which allows any combination of cities and/or counties, throughout the State of Michigan, to incorporate a port authority. The DWCPA plays a very active role in issues of international trade, waterborne commerce and other transportation development, border crossings and unique models of public-private partnerships using its bonding capacity and a successful track record of obtaining grants.

The DWCPA applauds Representative Tobocman's efforts to bring attention to our international port and border community in Detroit and Wayne County. There have been limited efforts to update and modernize the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway infrastructure since its creation in 1959, in large part, due to the complex bi-national planning and cost-sharing involved. The DWCPA is supportive of, and has worked closely with, the operators of existing border crossings to help ensure their viability and security, in recognition of the very important role they play in the well-being of our regional and state economies. We also are supportive of the State of Michigan as it develops the necessary bi-national partnerships required of international crossings with our valuable nearby Canadian neighbor.

However, the DWCPA does feel that the proposed legislation stretches quite far beyond the definition of a border crossing and the accompanying footprint for such infrastructure. The definition of a "port of entry," as written in HB 4563 encompasses not only every port terminal along the 32-mile stretch of the Detroit River and navigable portions of the Rouge River, but every company in the region involved in international trade, since all of these entities incorporate some level of U.S. Customs services. Furthermore, HB 4563 calls for several additional layers of regulation that will add undue cost to an already over-taxed waterway system. In fact, the DWCPA has been working with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow to eliminate the Harbor Maintenance Tax which, for years, has penalized regional shippers and, therefore, discouraged the use of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System as a means of conducting trade in a cost-effective manner. I might also add that waterborne commerce has the added benefit of reducing roadway congestion and its threat to public safety.

The DWCPA remains committed to promoting trade, preserving our ports, and maximizing economic development opportunities. Because of our strong affiliations, both locally and nationally, we seek representation on the proposed 15-member Board of Directors proposed in HB 4563 and, respectfully, request the creation of a work group made up of interested parties charged with the task of further exploring the issues contained in this important legislation.

We support the intent of HB 4563 and the focus it brings to our international port and border-crossing system. Representative Tobocman's efforts to address the needs of one of the most unique areas of the country, in terms of international trade and commerce, are welcomed and encouraged. We look forward to working with the Representative and contributing further.

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